WILD APPLES

GOGARTY

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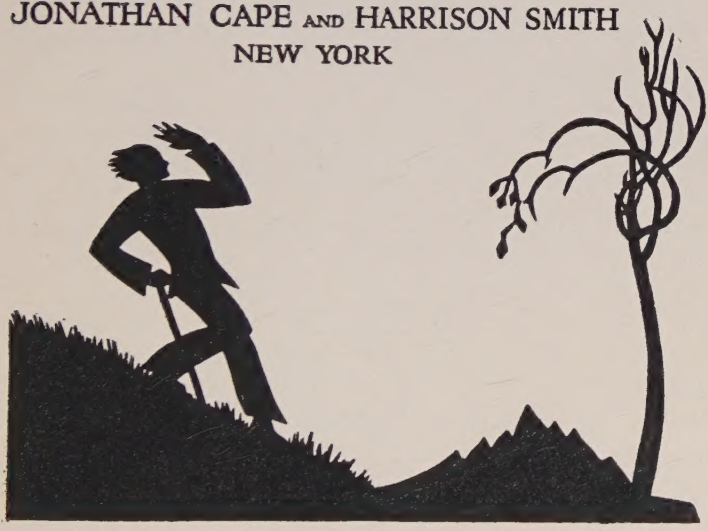
WILD APPLES

BY OLIVER GOGARTY

JONATHAN CAPE AND HARRISON SMITH
NEW YORK



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INTRODUCTION

It is not often that a friend of many years enchants us by the revelation of unexpected beauty. Oliver Gogarty had for two decades delighted his intimates by a wit from which nothing was immune, neither the illustrious in the heavenly city or his own, or perhaps, I should say, the imaginations some had of heaven or of themselves. There were most brilliant grotesques in verse, sometimes as intricate in pattern as the ornament on the Book of Kells, but by their nature much of that early verse was esoteric, we would lament that so original a talent ran like Alph, the sacred stream, in a subterranean brilliancy. We might, we would say, have had from Oliver comedies as witty as Wilde's, or a narrative of personalities more diverting than the *Ave Salve Vale* of his friend, George Moore. We were hopeful that the art which bedazzled us would sometime incarnate in a form where we could share our laughter with the world. I thought anything was possible, novel or drama; but I did not expect beautiful poetry. A prodigal wit rarely appears the chrysalis out of which we expect the winged lovely creature Poetry to be born. Then he begun shyly to show us verses of a different character, and one by one these lyrics entered into memory and cre-

ated in us a new imagination of our friend. The new verses had lost some of the substance of the earlier but not any firmness of outline. They grew to be precise and delicate as if cloud or air or light could be carven or counterfeited in words; a luminous quality we can see to perfection in his *Plum Tree by the House*. If the later Oliver writes of girl or woman he suggests in them an airy distinction as if he saw the psyche fluttering within the flesh. Though he may speak only of a physical grace he makes us think rather of mind than body. The verses get more and more airy in character. When he has become at home in this new mood I have hopes that the wit which animated the earlier verses will return without frightening away the beauty, and we may have in him the same rare union of wit and beauty which enchants us in the lyrics of Heine.

I take great delight in the poetry of my friend and I write this in the hope that some who know me may be led to take in it the same pleasure as I do.

A. E.

Dedication

For all you know, to you.

THE CRAB TREE

Here is the crab tree,
Firm and erect,
In spite of the thin soil,
In spite of neglect.
The twisted root grapples
For sap with the rock,
And draws the hard juice
To the succulent top:
Here are wild apples,
Here's a tart crop!

No outlandish grafting
That ever grew soft
In a sweet air of Persia,
Or safe Roman croft;
Unsheltered by steading,
Rock-rooted and grown,
A great tree of Erin,
It stands up alone,
A forest tree spreading
Where forests are gone.

Of all who pass by it
How few in it see
A westering remnant
Of days when Lough Neagh

Flowed up the long dingles
Its blossom had lit,
Old days of glory
Time cannot repeat;
And therefore it mingles
The bitter and sweet.

It takes from the West Wind
The thrust of the main;
It makes from the tension
Of sky and of plain,
Of what clay enacted,
Of living alarm,
A vitalised symbol
Of earth and of storm,
Of Chaos contacted
To intricate form.

Unbreakable wrestler!
What sapling or herb
Has core of such sweetness
And fruit so acerb?
So grim a transmitter
Of life through mishap,
That one wonders whether
If that in the sap,
Is sweet or is bitter
Which makes it stand up.

GALWAY

A GREY town in a country bare,
The leaden seas between,
When light falls on the hills of Clare
And shows their valleys green,
Take in my heart your place again
Between your lake and sea,
O City of the watery plain
That means so much to me!

Your cut-stone houses row on row,
Your streams too deep to sing,
Whose waters shine with green as though
They had dissolved the Spring:
Your streets that still bring into view
The harbour and its spars;
The chimneys with the turf-smoke blue
That never hides the stars!

It is not very long since you,
For Memory is long,
Saw her I owe my being to,
And heart that takes to song,
Walk with a row of laughing girls
To Salthill from Eyre Square,
Light from the water on their curls
That never lit more fair.

Again may come your glorious days,
Your ships come back to port,
And to your city's shining ways
The Spanish dames resort!
And ere the tidal water falls
Your ships put out to sea . . .
Like crimson roses on grey walls,
Your memories to me!

WITH A COIN FROM SYRACUSE

WHERE is the hand to trace
The contour of her face:
The nose so straight and fine
Down from the forehead's line;

The curved and curtal lip
Full in companionship
With that lip's overplus,
Proud and most sumptuous,

Which draws its curve within,
Swelling the faultless chin?
What artist knows the tech-
nique of the Doric neck:

The line that keeps with all
The features vertical,
Crowned with the thickly rolled
And corrugated gold?

The curious hands are lost
On the sweet Asian coast,
That made the coins enwrought,
(Fairer than all they bought)

With emblems round the proud
Untroubled face of god
And goddess. Or they lie
At Syracuse hard by

The Fountain Arethuse.
Therefore from Syracuse
I send this face to her,
Whose face is lovelier,

Alas, and as remote
As hers around whose throat
The curving fishes swim,
As round a fountain's brim.

It shows on the reverse
Pherenikos the horse;
And that's as it should be:
Horses she loves, for she

Is come of the old stock,
Lords of the lime-stone rock,
And acres fit to breed
Many a likely steed,

Straight in the back and bone,
With head high, like her own,
And blood that, tamed and mild,
Can suddenly go wild.

PORTRAIT WITH BACKGROUND

DERVORGILLA's supremely lovely daughter,
Recalling him, of all the Leinstermen Ri,
Him whose love and hate brought o'er the water,
Strongbow and Henry;

Brought rigid law, the long spear and the horsemen
Riding in steel; and the rhymed, romantic, high line;
Built those square keeps on the forts of the Norsemen,
Still on our sky-line.

I would have brought, if I saw a chance of losing
You, many more—we are living in War-rife time—
Knights of the air and the submarine men cruising,
Trained through a life-time;

Brought the implacable hand with law-breakers,
Drilled the Too-many and broken their effrontery;
Broken the dream of the men of a few acres
Ruling a country;

Brought the long day with its leisure and its duty,
Built once again the limestone lordly houses—
Founded on steel is the edifice of Beauty,
All it avows is.

Here your long limbs and your golden hair affright men,
Slaves' are their souls, and instinctively they hate them,
Knowing full well that such charms can but invite men,
Heroes to mate them.

Eyes of the green of the woods that maddened Tristram!
Fair skin and smooth as the rosy-footed dove's wing!
Who would not fight, if he saw you, against this trammelling of Love's wing?

Aye; and bow down if he saw but half the vision,
I dare not call to the mind's eye, to adore you;
And be, if that great light shone with precision,
Awe-struck before you.

UPON HORAN

YOUR bastards, through some failure in your force,
Were prematurely born or early buried;
So you, with small disgrace and no divorce,
Failed into Virtue; but she too miscarried.

PORTRAIT

LIGHTS in her gaudy hair,
How she advances
Joyous and debonair!
And her eyes' glances,
Though the sun shines on her,
Are not made duller:
Joyous and debonair
Motion and colour!

Can there be anywhere
In all creation
Any sight lovelier?
Did the Greek nation
See in its columnar
Towns, or its isles,
Any sight lovelier?
Wait till she smiles.

PORTRAIT

(DIANA CLOTHED)

WHO would have thought
That your mottled and your speckled,
Wavering and dappled,
Leaf-brown costume in the light,
Held at the shoulder
By an orchid's freckled anther,
Covering a bosom of an interrupted white,
Was but the pelt
That the Maiden, the Resistless,
Light of Heel, the Huntress,
Yes; the tall Toxophilite,
Skinned in the brakes
From a slowly dying panther,
Shot in the brakes
By her fatal arrow's flight?—
Nothing to do with a merciful mild amice;—
Too well I know, and it needs no second sight!
Ah, now I know;
I should long ago have guessed it
From your way who wear it,
It is nothing more than this:
Cruelty clings to it—
It is nothing but the chlamys
Covering, and showing up
The breast of Artemis!

PORTRAIT

You in your apple-tree
In your sun bonnet
(Ribands upon it),
Dimples that laugh at me!
Thus you came into view
Over our hedge,
Blithe as the light on you
At the lips' edge!

How many years ago?
What does it matter?
Years cannot scatter
All I beheld in you.
Sleep brought it back again
In its old sweetness:
Time can but steal in vain
From the rich darkness.

AFTER GALEN

Only the Lion and the Cock,
As Galen says, withstand Love's shock.
So, Dearest, do not think me rude
If I yield now to lassitude,
But sympathise with me. I know
You would not have me roar, or crow.

PORTRAIT

Jane W . . . of Grand Rapids

She does not seem to care,
She does not know her hair
Is golden with an hint
Of Trojan ashes in't.
She does not seem to know
How rarely dark her eyes go
With honey-coloured hairs
Drowning the coral ears.

She does not know her worth,
She thinks that Love is mirth,
And laughs; I never saw
Beauty more free from awe.
Yet if the Queen of Love
Descended from above,
What could she do but choose
Her body young and loose,
Her calm and easy ways
And that wide level gaze?
And maybe in that dress
Add to her loveliness.

The Past was mine—but O
With this unmelted snow
America has caught

The eye of all my thought:
Helen, your foster town
Once and for all is down,
And now Grand Rapids race
To take Scamander's place,
Araby the Blest
Loses the Phœnix nest!

And now, and now
My song shall tell—but how?
Can poetry compose
The budding of a rose,
Or prosody out-do
The throstle in the yew,
Or memory make up
For Life and love and hope?
Before her living word
My singing is absurd:
"You have my hand," she said,
"Where shall I put my head?"

WHEN IT IS TOO LATE

When your looking-glass no longer
Throws enchantment back again,
That enchantment which was stronger
Than you guessed, on lives of men,

Take my book to find reflected,
Safe from ravage of the years,
All the pride by time rejected:
Only then, break into tears.

PORTRAIT

I TREMBLE to think that soon
Darkness shall close my sight,
And all that under the sun
I saw, and by moonlight:
Beautiful shadows and forms,
Colours, and, over the hill,
Clouds like visible storms
At peace when the air is still;
The nameless, wonderful hues
That torture the eyes with joy
When the sea has a faint primrose,
On its blue and silver alloy—
All to be left untold,
The white and ethereal blue
That carries the chaos of gold
Dreams that I dreamt of you!
But these the years must spare,
Too transient far for time:

There is no age for the air,
Light is not of our clime.
But I whom the nets of the years
Surely at last shall enmesh
Before I can save in verse
The timeless traits of the flesh,
Shall have no peace till the cloud
Of thought takes definite shape,
And bodies you forth unbowed,
Tall, on a bare landscape,
Where earth the stone upthrusts—
Holding your exquisite frock
Against the morning gusts,
And light is on half the rock.

THE YACHT

Her ruddy pines stand straight up in the day
And scribble on the water: all is well.
My thoughts break out in canvas to the swell
Beyond our little harbour in the Bay,
To other isles and mountains far away
Where those who go in white and purple dwell.
But of the long adventure who may tell
Who steer for Beauty, if the Dream betray?
That was a puff from Pindus: now she heels!
The snow-born breezes bosom all her snows,

O hold her down on rock-bred Homer's isle!
No; it were better done to turn her keel's
Green blade back homewards while our own sea
flows,
And the unageing Wind is blowing still.

TO THE MOON

O BORN before our birth began!
Through all your blanched and listening vales
Far from the echoing shores of man,
Aloof, may sing—what nightingales!

THE WAVELESS BAY
(Kiltymon)

I CLOSE my eyes to hold a better sight,
And all my mind is opened on a scene
Of oaks with leaves of amber in the green,
A mist of blue beneath them: to the right
A long cape fades beyond the azurite
Of one calm bay to which the pastures lean.
The rounded fields are warm, and in between
The yellow gorse is glaring stiff and bright.
It matters little what distraction drives
Clouds through my mind and breaks the outer day.

For all I know that distant water strives
Against the land. I have it all my way:
Through budding oaks a steadfast sun survives:
Peace on the fading cape, the waveless bay.

ON TROY

I GIVE more praise to Troy's redoubt
For Love kept in, than War kept out.

TO BERKELEY

I TOO, could prove from my eye which is susceptible
Sadly of deception that things are not what they
seem:
Saw you my example, you would say that I had
chosen well:
Julia when she dresses is more and more a dream!

TO A FRIEND

IF it be true that poets, as you say,
Envisage in their verse and populate,
By dreams that shall come true, the future state,
I must be careful whom I shall portray
Lest I sit down, forever and for aye,
With the strange characters I celebrate.

O awful thought: our Fancy is our Fate!
(Let me erase some writings while I may!)
But one thing I am sure of, dear Æ.:
I will confront the malcreated crew,
Victims or merely subjects of my song,
If I can reach the bourne where you shall be
Creating kindness as you always do,
And I may bring my fancy friends along.

TO Æ. GOING TO AMERICA

Dublin transmits you, famous, to the West.
  America shall welcome you, and we,
  Reflected in that mighty glass, shall see,
In full proportion, power at which we guessed:
We live too near the eagle and the nest
  To know the pinion's wide supremacy:
  But yours, of all the wings that crossed the sea,
Carries the wisest heart and gentlest.
  It is not multitudes, but Man's idea
Makes a place famous. Though you now digress,
  Remember to return, as, back from Rome,
  Du Bellay journeyed to his Lyrè home;
And Plutarch, willingly, to Chæronea
  Returned, and stayed, lest the poor town be less.

TO W. B. YEATS WHO SAYS THAT HIS CASTLE OF BALLYLEE IS HIS MONUMENT

To Stones trust not your monument
To make a living fame endure.
Who built Dun Angus battlement?
O'Flaherty is forgotten in Auchnanure.

And he who told how Troy was sacked
And what men clipt the lovely Burd,
Had seven Mayors to swear, in fact,
Their towns first heard his babbling word.

MARCUS CURTIUS

In response to an oracle which declared that a gulf recently opened in the Forum could only be closed by casting into it that which Rome held most dear, Marcus Curtius, fully armed, mounted his war-horse and plunged into it, for that which Rome held dearest was her chivalry.

'Tis not by brooding on delight
That men take heart of pride and force
To pull the saddle-girthings tight
And close the gulf on staring horse.

From softness only softness comes;
Urged by a bitterer shout within,
Men of the trumpets and the drums
Seek, with appropriate discipline,

That Glory past the pit or wall
Which contradicts and stops the breath,
And with immortalising gall
Builds the most stubborn things on death.

SONG

Dreams, bring her back!
For, Dream-like, she
Is lovelier than Reality!
And only You can wander where
Dead wonders and the Times past are:
For You those suns are shining yet
Which are, for me, forever set.

Dreams bring her back!
That I may have
A proof that You can pass the grave.
For, Dreams, if You have naught to give
Of exaltation while I live,
What hope shall be when I am gone
Where traffic is with shades alone?

FRESH FIELDS

I GAZE and gaze when I behold
The meadows springing green and gold.
I gaze until my mind is naught
But wonderful and wordless thought!
Till, suddenly, surpassing wit,
Spontaneous meadows spring in it;
And I am but a glass between
Un-walked in meadows, gold and green.

KINGDOMS

THE sailor tells the children
  His stories of the sea,
Their eyes look over the water
  To where his wonders be:

The flowers as big as tea-cups,
  The great big butterflies,
The long unfooted beaches
  Where stored-up treasure lies.

More than a thousand islands
  Each curved around its pool;
All kingdoms filled with sunlight,
  Where no one goes to school;

The fish that leave the water
  In sudden bends of light
The birds as blue as china;
  The flies that gleam by night . . .

Till, slowly, I remember
  A wistful place; and then,
The story of that Kingdom
  First told to long-shoremen.

TO THE FIXED STARS

(LUX PERPETUA)

GAZERS at Earth who may not snatch
  A moment's rest, O Sentinels,
Who watch with none to change the watch,
  Is there a Rumour which foretells,

After long vigilance relief;
  And timeless ease from age-long hours:
A respite from the blaze of Life
  Deep in a shelter such as ours,

Where you may bathe your eyes in Night,
  Trusting to Death's long "All is well!"
Ah, no! For what can give respite
  And quench the light perpetual?

Our very shade which seems to rest,
  Spins at the apex of its cone;
The dark in which the stars shine best
  Is by some solar radiance thrown.

Even the Primordial Dark that once
  Engendered light, nor growth debars,
Is phosphorescent with dead suns
  And pregnant with the dust of stars.

TO SOME SPITEFUL PERSONS

Your Envy pleases me and serves
My fame by all your muttering talk,
Just as the starling flock that swerves
With shrieks aside, and shows the hawk.

Men will lift up the head to stare,
Although it never stoop to strike,
At that still pinion stretched on air,
When all such chattering fills the dyke.

THE PLUM TREE BY THE HOUSE

In morning light my damson showed
Its airy branches oversnowed
On all their quickening fronds,
That tingled where the early sun
Was flowing soft as silence on
Palm trees by coral ponds.
Out of the dark of sleep I come
To find the clay break into bloom,
The black boughs all in white!
I said, I must stand still and watch
This glory, strive no more to match
With similes things fair.
I am not fit to conjure up
A bird that's white enough to hop
Unstained in such a tree.
Leave me alone with my delight
To store up joy against the night,
This moment leave to me!
Why should a poet strain his head
To make his mind a marriage bed;
Shall Beauty cease to bear?
There must be things which never shall
Be matched or made symmetrical
On Earth or in the Air;
Branches that Chinese draughtsmen drew,

Which none may find an equal to,
Unless he enter there
Where none may live—and more's the pity!—
The Perfect, The Forbidden City,
That's built—Ah, God knows where!
Then leave me while I have the light
To fill my mind with growths of white,
Think of them longer than
Their budding hour, their springing day,
Until my mind is more than May;
And, may be, I shall plan
To make them yet break out like this
And blossom where their image is,
More lasting and more deep
Than coral boughs in light inurned,
When they are to the earth returned;
And I am turned to sleep.

MELSUNGEN

Love, let us go to the village of Melsungen,
Folded in the river which is flowing without noise:
Dark are the woods and the fields are green and
golden,
Spreading to the ripple of the hills against the
skies.

Hold down the car on the long road to Melsungen;
Hold the heart down that no speed can ever sate!
Through the noon already it has raced into the evening,
Raced, and reached the gables in the evening falling late.

Long have I gazed at your window in Melsungen,
Yellow in the lamp-light while I watch the miles of noon,
Dreaming of peace as the arrow from the bow-string
Dreams, and gains in quiet from the speed which makes it swoon.

Love, let us lean from a dormer in Melsungen,
Giving on the valley where the light has found the stream,
Cool and becalmed, as the moonlight on the water,
Motionless and quiet as beyond our life a dream.

THIS KIP

(*Ce bourdel où tenons nostre estat.*—Villon.)

WHORE-MASTER of the Body, O my Soul,
Hard is his lot who seeks a harlot's love!
Yet, though in loathsome ways constrained to move
With honour lost, treasure and self-control,
Contemptuous scowl while adding up the toll
Of sumptuous hours, and, even as you shove
Coins in your pouch, be stern and disapprove;
Remembering that, capricious, from her rôle
Of revel in the raucous, flaring kip,
She'll turn to you for solace from its rows;
For reminiscent sweet companionship,
To reach again to days, ere all was changed,
When there were fields to walk in unestranged,
And morning sun, and quiet in the house.

TO THE MAIDS NOT TO WALK IN THE WIND

When the wind blows, walk not abroad,
For, Maids, you may not know
The mad, quaint thoughts which incommode
Me when the winds do blow.

What though the tresses of the treen
In doubled beauty move,
With silver added to their green,
They were not made for Love.

But when your clothes reveal your thighs
And surge around your knees,
Until from foam you seem to rise,
As Venus from the seas . . .

Though ye are fair, it is not fair!
Unless you will be kind,
Till I am dead, and changed to AIR,
O walk not in the wind!

RINGSEND

(AFTER READING TOLSTOI.)

I WILL live in Ringsend
With a red-headed whore,
And the fan-light gone in
Where it lights the hall-door;
And listen each night
For her querulous shout,
As at last she steels in
And the pubs empty out.
To soothe that wild breast
With my old-fangled songs,
Till she feels it redressed
From inordinate wrongs,
Imagined, outrageous,
Preposterous wrongs,
Till peace at last comes,
Shall be all I will do,
Where the little lamp blooms
Like a rose in the stew;
And up the back-garden
The sound comes to me
Of the lapsing, unsoilable,
Whispering sea.

THE WEATHERCOCK

By pointing to that golden bird,
You mock me laughing, There you are!
But I see in him bravely reared
Above the pebbled tower and Square,
A guard against the lightning's stroke,
A sign to bring the church good luck.

Point him again! I would become
The bird which you point out to mock,
With long brown tendons on your thumb,
I would become the weathercock:
Neither inconstant nor unkind
Were I the cock and you the wind.

For I would, in those fields of air
Love you as in these fields of grass
And meet your moods and seem to veer,
Swinging around to let you pass;
Until the verger at the vane
Would look and say, There will be rain.

O what a mascot I should make
For lovers as the eve advances;
Wishing the sun down for their sake
Whose shadows run to leap the fences;
Watching the big star bless their hour,
Lonely in light above the tower!

But would you have the heart to leave
Me long there in suspense above
The little garden of the grave
To gaze on other lovers' love;
To be forever left in the lurch
While wedding parties entered church?

The church to which Love hopes to urge
You doubting where his lamp is fixed,
The church to which the paths converge,
The church where NOW and THEN are mixed,
The church which gathers things divine,
And tops them with its lucky sign.

PETERSEN LANE

THE masts at the bottom of Petersen Lane
Are red in the glow which a level sun casts;
And if you look close, you can see the long grain
Of the great pines of Norway which make up the
masts.

The tall polar neighbours that knew the long day,
And gazed out at azure-bright pinnacled forms;
The resinous timbers immuned from decay
By thunders ancestral and morningless storms.

The pub at the corner abuts on the Quay,
And there go the dockers, there everyone goes
Who likes to be drinking with men from the sea;
And mothers prolific and impudent pros.

The third-story skylarks are singing again;
The children are dancing. O when may their feet
Escape from the alley called after the Dane?
There's hope in the masts at the end of the street.

O BOYS, O BOYS!

O BOYS, the times I've seen!
The things I've done and known!
If you knew where I have been?
Or half the joys I've had,
You never would leave me alone;
But pester me to tell,
Swearing to keep it dark,
What . . . but I know quite well:
Every solicitor's clerk
Would break out and go mad;
And all the dogs would bark!

There was a young fellow of old
Who spoke of a wonderful town,
Built on a lake of gold,

With many a barge and raft
Afloat in the cooling sun
And lutes upon the lake,
Played by such courtesans . . .
The sight was enough to take
The reason out of a man's
Brain; and to leave him daft,
Babbling of lutes and fans.

The tale was right enough:
Willows and orioles,
And ladies skilled in love:
But they listened only to smirk,
For he spoke to incredulous fools,
And, maybe, was sorry he spoke;
For no one believes in joys,
And Peace on Earth is a joke,
Which, anyhow, telling destroys;
So better go on with your work:
But Boys! O Boys! O Boys!

TO REFORMERS

Tell me you who would design a
Perfect Paradise for man,
Could it better be than China,
In the days of Kubla Khan?

TO A COCK

Why do you strut and crow,
And, thus, all gaudy go,
Through squalour with a show
That tempts derision?
Do you a livery use,
Or dress you up in hues
Which you were free to choose
Of your own vision?

Colours of dawn and joy
That with delight destroy:
Your body all a Troy
To house Desire;
Your mien as proud and brave
As his who fought to save
The fatal Queen who gave
But gifts of fire.

Strange, that a small brown hen
Should charm you thus! For men
Great Beauty shines, as when
The Argive valleys
Bore her limbs, for whom Greece
For ten years knew no peace;
Or our own Western seas
Bore Grace O'Malley's.

What, if I could appear
As you do, and strike fear!
But would she fail to sneer
Who will not heed a
Lover? nor cry, Absurd
You are; but as a bird . . . !
Is it to be inferred
That I am Leda?

Nor would it much avail,
Were I to say: The male
In beauty doth prevail
Largely in Nature.
For she would but retort:
Is man the only sort
Whose females must pay court,
My beauteous creature?

Alas, befeathered bull!
My love's too pitiful,
Too pensive, kind, less full
Than that of bird, or
Beast; overcharged with fate,
And more compassionate
Than yours you satiate
Half linked to murder!

The more we rise above
The beast, or even the dove,
Sorrow distempers Love;
But yours is gladdest:
Soon gathered and soon spent
A fierce arbitrament:
And you do not repent,
O perfect Sadist!

To Semele none came;
None to each Sabine dame;
Not Hercules aflame;
Not Dawn to Heaven
Came with as great affright
As you do, burning bright:
Not, for the poor hen's plight,
To Kathleen, Kevin.

Further she cannot go,
She falters and lies low,
Brought down by Love, a throe
That throws us all!
Soon to be scaled and hacked,
And, like a city, sacked,
With nothing left intact
Within the wall!

When you have persevered
As did the dawn you cheered
When darkness disappeared,
Give not the Strife up
Till by the Passion Play
Of Death, for Life's relay,
The old authentic Way,
You conjure Life up!

O trample her in dust
So that you slake your lust!
Pull back her neck; and thrust
To kill the tempter!
Your peace how dare she fret
With feet demurely set!
Give her another yet,
And don't exempt her!

Take vengeance for the sting
In Love's elusive wing;
With beak and talon cling
In full refulgence!
O work for all you're worth
To bring your spirit to birth;
For this kind goeth forth
By self-indulgence!

For when your spurs were gained,
Passion was unrestrained.
Your hues were not obtained
From dust and ashes!
You did of old deride
His spirit who denied;
You are but gratified
By Life's fierce flashes!

Now indignation foams!
The purple of your combs
Is purpler than the plum's,
Or purple heather's!
What though it must endure,
Break Beauty! O secure
Some respite from the lure
Of all the feathers!

PRAISE

Why should I hold my praise
To wait for better days?
The best of times is now;
And this is good enough:
For Youth is at its best,
Youngest and loveliest,
Full of the sapling stuff;
And so are you.

We shall not in the flesh
Ever again be as fresh,
With courage quite so stout.
Never shall I surprise,
Never with more delight,
The little mist of light
As if your soul shone out
Before your eyes.

Roses and snow betoken
Your words before they're spoken;
Nothing can be more small,
Nothing more fair unless
The smile that makes them glisten . . .
O bear with me and listen!
The fact remains for all
Your humbleness!

The poplar never stoops,
The gentle willow droops,
Your walk holds both of these.
The movement of your hips
Has so much buoyance in it . . .
Be silent! Just a minute . . .
It makes me think of ships
Upon far seas.

Now let me have my say
In my own lyric way;
And then you may not frown.
My song is half a ruse
To praise myself in you,
Silence would never do,
It cost a man his Muse
When Rome went down.

Never shall it be said
Of me when I am dead:
He had too tardy sense
Of Beauty. Though your frowns
Are all my thanks, I tried
To sing of lovely pride;
There are no laurel crowns
For reticence!

THE NETTLE

A VERY pleasant hillside falls among
Pines to the south, and in a greensward settles;
And while we loitered there my Love was stung,
My girl-Adonis on the thigh by nettles.
O what a bore! I must sit down, said she;
I cannot walk! . . . O darling, what's the matter?

A nettle stung me where you must not see,
Just where my stocking ends and thigh grows
fatter.
But I will shut my eyes before it gets . . .
And you shall guide me so I shall not miss it—
Before the poison in your system sets,
I'll press my lips and very gently kiss it.
The little blister white upon the white
Of sudden snow where violets were peeping,
Was reddened by the cure which set it right.
Now if, years hence, you find they are not keeping
My grave with all the reverence that is due
To one whom Beauty's smile in Life elated,
O, Busybody, trouble not! Can you
Be sure the nettle waves to desecrate it?

THE SHIP

THERE goes the Ship! The plunging prow
Cannot be seen so far from home;
But you can in the mind's eye now
Behold the clear green cleft to foam.

Her sails in air are tautly bent,
The sunlight sets her spars on fire;
Of element for element
What lovelier outcome of desire?

Clipt by the wind, the wave leapt up;
And now their ambient child comes on,
The surge spreads out behind her poop;
And air and water blend in one

And she can hold her stately head
Up where the white bird hardly stirs,
And on the yielding crystal tread,
Proud of that lineage of hers.

But where's she bound for? Who can tell?
For what one does not know, who cares?
I only know she looks right well,
And bravely on the deep she fares.

THE PHŒNIX

WAKEFUL, I saw my window sashed
  With silver light before sunrise,
When, suddenly, the Phœnix flashed
  A rainbow streak across the skies;
And it was gone before I said:
  The Phœnix! In a book I read
The night before, I learnt to trace
That marvel to the happy place
It flies in, neither linden or lawn
Of Earth, but in the Groves of Dawn.

There are so many things, the sight
  Goes clean through as it were X-ray;
The finer things that hide in light,
  Or in the heaven, that one might say,
Invisible, but we who know
How heedlessly the sight can go,
Employ the mind's eye but to find
That we are marvellously blind.

There are so many things that I
  Could see that now seem to be hid,
I feel that they would crowd the sky
  If I but lifted up a lid;
Or sang a song, or gave a shout,
That I would see them standing out:
But, as it is, what have I done
With all I've seen under the sun?

The Spring that comes before the Spring
  And waits while boughs are thin and bare,
A deepened light, a quickening,
  Annunciation in the air,
Delights me more, though cold and brief,
Than buds abounding, and the leaf.

And then the silver isles out far
  On leaden edge of Eastern seas,
Beneath a dappled sky, which are
  Our daily lost Atlantides,

A moment seen, and they are gone,
Bright archipelagos of dawn,
Are more to me, and solider,
Than the near hills which never stir.

But would there be this seeking for,
  This wistful straining after things:
Islands surmised from lines of shore,
  Unless within me there were wings,
Wings that can fly in, and belong
Only to realms revealed by song,
That bring those realms about their nest,
Merging the Seeker and the Quest?

They beat in faintly purple air;
  Beneath them rise autumnal trees;
But Autumn's colours usher there
  A Spring which is Eternity's,
A Spring which overtakes the fruit,
Till blossoms crown the fond pursuit.
And there is neither Time nor Space
Within that paradisal place;
Nor separating length and breadth;
With Love identical is Death;
And no more fearful in that grove
Is Death to those who dwell than Love.

Not in our East then, but in verse,
  The far-seen flashing feather flies,
In Groves of Dawn whose wells immerse
  The star that lights and leads the Wise.
But rare's the book that holds the Word
That moves the uncompanioned Bird
To shake the air, and, in its flight,
Rain down the variegated light
That makes all timeless, and transforms
Unmagical and ageing norms;
And, when it falls upon, renews
The full blue eye, the twinkling thews,
And makes again the heart of man
Ageless and epinikian.

THE EMPEROR'S DREAM

When the internal dream gives out,
I let my eyes wander about
Amongst the gay and the grotesque
Ornaments upon my desk,

Where books are set on end and stacked
By Plato and by Homer backed;
But, in the present mood preferred,
I see my Chinese crystal bird:

A Phœnix maybe, who can say?
That ship that, off Arabia,
Sighted the Phœnix flying East,
Its crew could tell about it best.

They did not need a second look;
They knew it by the course it took;
And who am I to disagree,
When China sends it back to me

To sit before me carven clear,
As if the very atmosphere
Of regions where but dreams abide,
Was seized on and solidified

To crystal that shall last as long
As Beauty gains from Art and Song,
From those who bend to carve or sing,
Their tribute to her flying wing?

Was ever artist more supreme
To catch, to hold, to mould a dream,
Year in, year out, day after day,
And never to let a line go astray

Till undistracted, undeterred,
He caught the seldom-flying bird;
From solid air he craved its crest;
And set it airy in its nest?

I send my thoughts across the skies
Of regions where the Phœnix flies,
Where Past and Present are as one,
To bow before the Emperor's throne;

And seek the artist in the court,
Where only such as he resort;
And from these barbarous times and ways
Offer my crude barbarian praise.

Before we meet, I shall be told
How one day in the days of old,
The Emperor hearing what he did
(For nothing's from the Emperor hid)

Commanded him to send a proof
Of what on wing or fin or hoof
He fashioned with such skill that, poor,
His name yet reached an Emperor;

And that, when he had seen the bird,
He paused, and solemnly averred:
The crystal wings without a flaw
Were those that in a dream he saw.

And how the artist with bowed head
And eyes cast down, replied and said:
That all that made for skill he owed
To Him from Whom perfection flowed.

For in the Emperor's mind were held
Art's emblems; and, if one excelled,
Of those who mould, or carve or limn,
His genius was due to him.

And that at this the Emperor laughed,
Praising the master of a craft
Which had so worthily enshrined
Things hidden in an Emperor's mind.

We need not meet, since this is so:
What every craftsman knows, we know:
Before our work stands up complete,
The Emperor must have dreamt of it.

And if we please the Emperor's whim,
And perfectly produce his dream,
Time can but turn the works of men
Into an Emperor's dream again.

A PITHY PRAYER AGAINST LOVE

Gods, get me out of it!
Spirits of Laughter
Come to my aid now
And exorcise it!
O you, Priapus,

Stand till you're skyward,
Stand till you're all staff
And cannot rise it!
Let your preposterous
Pole fall upon her:
'That for her honour!'
Let not a thought now
Of comfort escape us:
Think what in boisterous,
Blowing Jack Falstaff,
Shakespeare made Love look.
Think how that cheerful
Chiel Hippocleides
Would this my fearful
Passion disparage;
Dancing incessantly,
Dancing indecently,
Danced, till he danced off
A cure for all heart-aches
(Dancing the cordax!),
Danced, till his carriage
Displeased the bride's father;
Dancing it further,
He danced off his marriage;
Danced to surmount his
Fate with: *ὄυ φροντίς*!
Teach me his courage.

THE CROWING OF A COCK

The knowledgeable Spengler says,
'Twere better far for you and me
To turn to take mechanics up
Than forge a lyric nowadays,
For Culture is a fading tree
That, broadening, withers at the top.
Where Spengler lives that well may be:
But Knowledge is of small account
Where men are governed by a clock,
Nor hold the Muses paramount,
Nor hear the crowing of a cock.

HERTES HELE

I love the beauty of this Autumn day,
And grieve to think that sombre-coloured night
Must cling about it as a cloak, and lay
A chilly hand on all that shows so bright.
The gaudy trees that now their flags display
Shall lose the pleasant flourish of their plight;
And the small bird, for all his merry say,
Hopping without a sound be lost to sight.
Let us enjoy the beauty while we may,

Filling our eyes, for brittle is the light;
Then with the foison grandly go away,
And furl our dreams, and let our songs take
flight,
Because Love too that made a little stay
Came with the blossoms that outlived a blight.

VERSE

What should we know,
For better or worse,
Of the Long Ago,
Were it not for Verse:
What ships went down;
What walls were razed;
Who won the crown;
What lads were praised?
A fallen stone,
Or a waste of sands;
And all is known
Of Art-less lands.
But you need not delve
By the sea-side hills
Where the Muse herself
All Time fulfils,

Who cuts with his scythe
All things but hers;
All but the blithe
Hexameters.

LULLABY

WANDER no more, my Thoughts, but keep
Within the moated realm of Sleep;
Wander no more, nor further than
The dusty wavering moth may span,
With wings which love the hearth-low light
With which the casement gilds the night;
Wander no more!

Content you there to rest and dream,
Nor watch the flickering armour gleam,
For nothing that the past has done
Need break your rest to ponder on,
Nor yet the future's lordlier scope:
Sleep is a sounder thing than Hope,
Content you there.

So yield to dream, and feel the sway
Of Earth upon the rainbow way;
And dream you feel it lift and take
A way you never felt awake;

For O, unless your dreams outdo
Your life, there is not much for you;
So yield to dream.

On darkness launched, now you go forth
Where there is neither South or North;
Nor now and then, nor here and there;
But something deeper than these are;
So may you, when you reach that bourne,
Be most reluctant to return,
On darkness launched.

LIFFEY BRIDGE

I gazed along the waters at the West,
Watching the low sky colour into flame,
Until each narrowing steeple I could name
Grew dark as the far vapours, and my breast
With silence like a sorrow was possessed.
And men as moving shadows went and came.
The smoke that stained the sunset seemed like
shame,
Or lust, or some great evil unexpressed.
Then with a longing for the taintless air,
I called that desolation back again,

Which reigned when Liffey's widening banks
were bare;
Before Ben Edair gazed upon the Dane,
Before the Hurdle Ford, and long before
Finn drowned the young men by its meadowy
shore.